

Abbreviated Articles

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Wall Street Journal, Paul Vieira and Kim Mackrael, 16 February 2022

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What Trudeau Can and Can't Do With Emergency Powers

Bloomberg, Brian Platt and Theophilos Argitis, 16 February 2022

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked emergency powers to quell protests over coronavirus restrictions that have brought gridlock to Canada's capital and blocked key trade corridors, citing the need to restore public order. It's the first time a federal government has resorted to such powers in five decades.

Ottawa police warn occupiers: 'Leave now'

Politico, Andy Blatchford, 16 February 2022

Police are warning convoy protesters to leave Ottawa or face arrest.

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Associated Press, Rob Gillies, 16 February 2022

Ottawa police trying to break the nearly three-week siege of the capital by truckers protesting Canada's COVID-19 restrictions began warning Wednesday drivers to leave immediately or risk arrest.

Full Articles

Police warn Ottawa protesters to leave or face criminal charges.

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Police on Wednesday ordered protesters clogging Ottawa's streets to leave or face criminal charges, appearing to set the stage for a clampdown on the demonstrations that have roiled the nation's capital for weeks.

"You must leave the area now. Anyone blocking streets, or assisting others in the blocking streets, are committing a criminal offense and you may be arrested," Ottawa Police Service said in a statement and in leaflets handed out to protesters. "You must immediately cease further unlawful activity or you will face charges."

The statement added that anyone coming to Ottawa to join the demonstration would also be breaking the law.

This week, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made his most aggressive move yet, declaring a national emergency aimed at ending the demonstrations that began nearly three weeks ago in the capital of Ottawa to protest vaccine mandates, and have since spread across the country.

His invocation of the Emergencies Act conferred enormous, if temporary, power on the federal government — and was the first time in more than a half-century that a Canadian government had taken such a drastic step.

The police will now be able to seize trucks and other vehicles used in the protests. Demonstrations that “go beyond lawful protest” would be banned, the prime minister said, and the government would formally ban blockades in designated areas like border crossings, airports and the capital.

But Mr. Trudeau and members of his cabinet offered repeated assurance that the act would not be used to suspend “fundamental rights.”

After the leaflets were handed out to protesters in Ottawa, a group of them near Parliament Hill asked police officers if they were going to be arrested. “If you’re given the order will you follow orders?” one of the protesters asked. Officers responded that for now they were not making arrests.

Denis Brown, 57, who quit his job as a technology service provider because he didn’t want to get vaccinated for travel, was circulating his own message on a piece of paper: The politicians should be arrested, it said.

The patience of many Canadians with the protests has grown thinner by the day. The nation’s image of serenity and order has given way to scenes of truckers shouting “freedom,” honking horns, confronting police and, in some cases, taunting fellow citizens who wear masks.

While most of the protests have been peaceful, the presence of more hard-line elements was underlined this week when four protesters in Alberta on Tuesday were charged with conspiracy to murder police officers, in relation to what the police described as a plan to use violence if officers tried to break up a blockade in Coutts, a village in southern Alberta bordering Montana.

A stockpile of weapons — including 13 long guns, handguns, a machete, multiple sets of body armor, a large quantity of ammunition and magazines — was discovered by the police in trailers in Alberta on Monday. Police said a small protest cell in the province had been prepared to use force to maintain the now-disbanded blockade in Coutts.

Thirteen people were arrested, ranging in age from 18 to 62, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Alberta said in a statement on Tuesday. In addition to charging four with conspiracy to commit murder, the police charged most of the remaining protesters with possession of a weapon and with “mischief” over 5,000 Canadian dollars.

Marco Mendicino, the minister of public safety, said Wednesday that three of the main border crossings previously impeded by protesters — in Coutts, Alberta; Surrey, British Columbia; and the Ambassador Bridge linking Windsor, Ontario to Detroit — were now open. The Ambassador Bridge is a vital supply route for the global automobile industry.

“For those thinking of coming to Ottawa this weekend, don’t,” Mr. Mendicino said, warning that people who did so would be risking involvement in criminal actions.

Ottawa’s chief of police, Peter Sloly, resigned on Tuesday amid criticism that the police and Mr. Trudeau’s government have been ineffectual and sluggish in stemming the disruptions.

While trucks continue to snarl traffic and disrupt daily life in Ottawa, there have been signs in recent days that the protests and blockades appear to be slowly diminishing. The Ottawa police said on Tuesday afternoon that the number of trucks in the downtown core had shrunk to 360 vehicles compared with more than 400 vehicles earlier in the week while about 150 protesters remained on the streets.

Deputy Chief Patricia Ferguson said the police had so far opened 172 criminal investigations related to the protests, charged 33 people, and issued 3,000 tickets.

"This is not a peaceful protest," Mr. Trudeau said this week. "The time to go home is now."

An activist who has advocated secession by western provinces becomes the public face of the Canada protests.

New York Times, Sarah Maslin Nir and Dan Bilefsky, 16 February 2022

She is a former fitness instructor who has sung and played guitar in a band called "Blind Monday" in Medicine Hat, Alberta. She was a senior member of a splinter party that advocated for Canada's Western provinces to secede from the country.

And now Tamara Lich, 47, has emerged as the public face and the most visible leader of the trucker convoy against pandemic restrictions that has roiled the nation's capital, shaken the country and prompted Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to take the drastic step of declaring a national public order emergency.

Ms. Lich speaks publicly in measured tones, and has become adept at deploying social media — and her Twitter feed — to amplify the protesters' grievances.

At a news conference in the Sheraton Ottawa Hotel on Monday, opened to media other than solely conservative-leaning news outlets for one of the first times, there was an air of gravitas in a room that echoed with the constant coughing of dozens of maskless supporters.

Wearing or not wearing a mask has become a potent political statement during the protests and some Ottawa residents have complained of being taunted by protesters.

"Some of you might oppose our grievances," Ms. Lich said to the television cameras. Like other members of the movement, she does not wear a mask. "However, democratic society will always have non-trivial disagreements, and righteous dissidents," she added.

What message discipline exists in the protest movement has come comes from Ms. Lich, said Jay Hill, the interim leader of the Maverick Party, a small right-of-center group based out of Calgary, Alberta, created to promote the separation of Canada's three western Prairie Provinces from the rest of the country. Ms. Lich, who worked previously in the energy sector, has deep ties to the group.

Even before the convoy assembled, its messaging was Ms. Lich's preoccupation, according to Mr. Hill, who said she called him several times even before arriving in Ottawa to strategize.

"We had a number of discussions about staying on message, about the need in this modern-day world of politics to have a very clearly defined message that is understandable and simple, a message that people can grasp hold of and run with," he said. "Tamara clearly understands that."

Ms. Lich played a leading role in organizing a GoFundMe campaign for the protests that raised \$7.8 million before the crowdfunding site shut it down after receiving "police reports of violence and other unlawful activity," GoFundMe said.

B.J. Dichter, an official spokesman for the convoy, said he joined the effort after Ms. Lich sought help managing the swell of donations flowing into a GoFundMe page. Mr. Dichter has a history of spouting anti-Islamist views and once said that "political Islam" is "rotting away at our society like syphilis." He has rejected claims of racism.

Within the occupiers' tightly managed ground operations, there are military hallmarks, outlined and executed by the several higher-ups who have backgrounds in the armed forces and law enforcement, according to leading members of the group.

Their organization includes oversight of each occupied street by a so-called road captain, with sections divided and overseen by block captains who operate below them.

Before becoming a prominent face of the protests, Ms. Lich was a personal trainer in Medicine Hat, a town once dubbed “Hell’s Basement,” by Rudyard Kipling for its location on top of huge natural gas field.

Zach Smithson, an employee at Body Building Depot Fitness Emporium, where Ms. Lich used to work, said she has become the talk of the town.

“I think we are all very proud of her,” he said.

Ms. Lich did not respond to a call and text message requesting an interview.

“I’m Jewish,” he told the journalist Rupa Subramanya. “I have family in mass graves in Europe. And apparently I’m a white supremacist.”

Canada Police Step Up Warning to Freedom Convoy Protesters

Wall Street Journal, Paul Vieira and Kim Mackrael, 16 February 2022

Ottawa police officers visited hundreds of heavy-duty trucks and other vehicles parked downtown and in front of the national legislature Wednesday, delivering notices to their owners and other protesters demanding they leave a demonstration zone immediately or face arrest and criminal charges.

“You must leave the area now,” the notice from Ottawa police said.

“Anyone blocking streets, or assisting others in the blocking [of] streets, are committing a criminal offence and you may be arrested.”

The official police warning is an escalation in law-enforcement efforts to end the 20-day protest, which has demanded that Canada immediately rescind all Covid-19 vaccine mandates and related social restrictions. The protest has inspired blockades at some crucial U.S.-Canada border crossings and prompted Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to invoke emergency powers aimed at ending the demonstrations.

A cabinet order said the protests in downtown Ottawa and at border crossings constitute a public-order emergency because of the threat of violence and unrest, and the disruption caused to the supply-chain network and two-way trade with the U.S. Canada’s top security official said Tuesday a small group behind the demonstrations poses a serious threat to public safety.

Ottawa police, in its notice, said that with the new powers made available under the federal emergency order, it is now illegal for new protesters or their supporters to enter downtown Ottawa and join the demonstration. Police also said drivers’ licenses could be revoked, per a separate emergency order from the province of Ontario.

Also Wednesday, the Children’s Aid Society of Ottawa put out a notice urging parents at the Ottawa demonstration to make arrangements in case they become unable to care for their children after police intervene. The agency said it would work to reunite families as soon as possible if parents and children are separated “following police efforts in ending the demonstration.”

The notices from police and the children’s aid society suggest law-enforcement officials are ready to move against the protesters, according to a former senior Canadian police commander. “This really is the last step of talking, and warning,” Chris Lewis, former commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police, told CTV News. “At some point, this push has to come to shove.”

Speaking to reporters Wednesday morning, Mr. Trudeau said decisions about dealing with the protesters would be left to the police. He said the emergency measures invoked, through the Emergencies Act, provide the police tools they can use “to actually make sure that laws are enforced in a proportional way.”

Elsewhere in Canada, Royal Canadian Mounted Police said they were successful in ending a trucker-led blockade at a border crossing connecting Manitoba with North Dakota. At its peak, RCMP said, 75 trucks were involved in the protest. Police said they were able to negotiate with protesters and they agreed to leave, with no arrests.

One problem police have faced in ending the protests is resistance from tow-truck drivers. Canadian tow-truck operators say they have received intimidating phone calls and texts from supporters of a trucker-led protest in Ottawa, warning them of consequences should they help police.

Senior Canadian officials said this week the absence of tow trucks has impaired police efforts to bring the protest to an end. The emergency powers invoked by the Canadian government give law-enforcement officers the authority to compel tow-truck operators to remove vehicles.

"Tow-truck operators and companies have been either threatened or intimidated. So it has been very difficult for police," a senior Canadian official told reporters in a late Tuesday briefing. With the new powers available to law enforcement, the official said, "police would then talk to [tow-truck owners], and ensure that they understand...the urgency of the situation."

Most Ottawa-area tow-truck operators contacted Wednesday declined to comment. Those who did speak said they are uncomfortable being caught in a struggle between police and the protesters.

"I think we've been put in an unfair situation," said Ibrahim Masri, chief executive of Alliance Towing, which operates in the Ottawa area with five trucks. "We're just a small business...and we're dealing with federal issues. And our position is, it's like, damned if you do and damned if you don't."

He said his company has received harassing calls from protest supporters and opponents, and he is worried about the safety of his drivers and damage to the vehicles. "That puts my staff, my company in jeopardy. If we do tow, is someone going to show up at our office? You know, is someone going to vandalize our trucks?" he said. "It's an unfair situation."

Trudeau Anti-Protest Law Sweeps Across Canada Financial Sector

Bloomberg, Kevin Orland and Brian Platt, 16 February 2022

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's emergency orders aimed at cutting off funds to protesters have cast a wide net across the Canadian financial industry, forcing portfolio managers and securities firms to take a harder look at who they are doing business with.

The new rules make demands of a broad list of entities -- including banks, investment firms, credit unions, loan companies, securities dealers, fundraising platforms, insurance companies and fraternal benefit societies. They must determine whether they're in "possession or control of property" of a person who's attending an illegal protest or providing supplies to demonstrators, according to orders published by the government late Tuesday night.

If they find such a person in their customer list, they must freeze their accounts and report it to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or Canada's intelligence service, the regulations say. Any suspicious transactions must also be reported to the country's anti-money-laundering agency, known as Fintrac.

"I think this caught everyone off guard last night when it was released," Greg Taylor, chief investment officer of fund manager Purpose Investments Inc., said on BNN Bloomberg Television. "There's a lot of questions right now in figuring out who we're targeting, what do we have to look at."

Trudeau's government invoked emergency powers on Monday, saying his government needed to choke off money to demonstrators who've blocked border crossings and have now been parked in downtown Ottawa for 20 days, refusing to leave. The protesters are demanding an end to vaccine mandates and other Covid-19 restrictions.

The invocation of the emergency powers, which also gives the government the power to ban public assembly in some locations, has prompted fiery debate among legislators and concerns that the government is overreaching in its bid to quell protests that have paralyzed the nation's capital.

MORE: What Trudeau Can and Can't Do With Emergency Powers: QuickTake

Trudeau has said the measures will be temporary, targeted and are "reasonable and proportionate" to the threats the country faces.

Caldwell Securities, an investment-advisory firm that operates in Ontario, hasn't received any communication from the government or law enforcement, nor a list of people whose accounts it's supposed to freeze, Chairman Thomas Caldwell said Wednesday.

Caldwell said he doesn't know how exactly his firm would go about enforcing the measures and he would seek outside legal advice before making any such move. The emergency rules are "posturing" on the part of the government, meant to frighten protesters enough to clear the current demonstrations, he said.

"If this thing is to be implemented, it will begin and end at the banking level," Caldwell said in an interview. "I can't see it getting down to our level. I would be quite surprised."

The new regulations say the act doesn't apply to insurance policies and that people who suffer injury or damage as a result of the order may apply for compensation. The order also gives the government the power to designate certain areas as "secure protected places, including critical infrastructure."

Financial institutions will be protected against lawsuits for actions they take under the emergency order, the government says.

The order also says governments are taking new authority to "share relevant information with banks and other financial services providers, if the information will help put a stop to the funding of illegal blockades and illegal activities." That applies not just to the federal government but provinces and territories, according to a statement from the finance department.

"I think compliance officers are going to be busy today figuring out what this means," Taylor said.

What Trudeau Can and Can't Do With Emergency Powers

Bloomberg, Brian Platt and Theophilos Argitis, 16 February 2022

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked emergency powers to quell protests over coronavirus restrictions that have brought gridlock to Canada's capital and blocked key trade corridors, citing the need to restore public order. It's the first time a federal government has resorted to such powers in five decades.

1. What powers does the act give Trudeau?

The Emergencies Act invoked by the prime minister provides the federal government with broad powers to prohibit public assembly, mobilize police, order private companies to provide essential services and mandate financial institutions to freeze accounts. In this instance, Trudeau is using all of these powers against the trucker-led protests. He's banned public assemblies that can "reasonably be expected to lead to a breach of the peace" around parliamentary buildings and other government buildings, critical infrastructure, war memorials and "any other place as designated by the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness." He's also mandating banks and other financial institutions to freeze accounts of individuals participating in the protest, while choking off funding to the organizers.

2. What does it mean to be able to commandeer services?

One problem authorities have had to deal with is a reluctance by towing companies to assist with the removal of vehicles and semi-trailers that have been used in the blockades. The tow truck companies are worried about damage to their equipment or retribution from protesters. These orders will compel them under threat of fines or jail time to assist the police. The federal government is similarly "commandeering" banks and insurers by forcing them to stop providing services to protesters.

3. What is the government doing about funds raised for the protests?

There have been two large crowdfunders for the protests, one through GoFundMe Inc. and one through GiveSendGo LLC. GoFundMe chose to cancel its C\$10-million (\$7.9 million) fundraiser after officials provided evidence it was being used to commit crimes. The protesters started a new one on GiveSendGo and raised a similar amount, but Ontario's provincial government obtained a court order to prohibit any banks or payment processors from allowing the funds to be distributed.

4. How extensive are the financial measures?

The measures apply to the full breadth of the nation's financial sector, whether federally regulated or not: foreign banks, credit unions, insurers, trusts, loan companies, security firms, portfolio managers, payment facilities and crowdfunding platforms. These companies must cease dealing in any way with individuals involved in illegal protests, including providing any access to digital currencies. Effectively, anyone deemed participating in these public assemblies will become de-banked. In addition, companies involved in crowdfunding or other electronic payment platforms will need to register with Canada's financial intelligence agency.

5. What powers is Trudeau providing to police?

Police are getting additional tools to get what is now deemed unlawful assembly under control. Officers have the ability to prevent supplies of everything from food to fuel (which is needed to keep vehicles and tents warm in freezing temperatures). Police can block anyone attempting to travel to or enter the area, and arrest those who refuse to comply. The government is also prohibiting anyone from bringing children to the protest, a reflection of the fact children are known to be sleeping in some of the trailers on site. What the government won't be doing is sending the military to help, as officials have said it would unnecessarily escalate the situation and that police have the proper training to make arrests.

5. Is there any check on emergency powers?

The emergency orders are made under legislation passed in 1988 that brought in many more safeguards than had previously existed for the use of such extraordinary powers. Before invoking the act, the prime minister must consult with the provincial governments whose territory will be impacted, and the orders must be put to parliament within seven days for a vote. The orders need to be renewed every 30 days and a parliamentary committee conducts oversight while they're in effect. When the emergency ends, the government is required to launch a public inquiry into the events.

7. Why is Trudeau doing this?

There are two main reasons. One is that the Ottawa police have been incapable of getting the streets under control in the capital city, declaring they don't have enough resources. However the police chief -- who resigned his post on Tuesday -- has also been blamed for being too passive in his response to the protest. The other reason is that parallel blockades have popped up at border crossings, cutting off critical trade routes. The government wants to prevent and quickly clear any future blockades.

8. What has the reaction been?

Although there is significant support in Canada for rolling back Covid-19 restrictions, public support for the trucker protests has dwindled as the blockades drag on. An Angus Reid Institute poll released Monday found 72% of Canadians want the protesters to "go home" as they've made their point, and 22% want them to stay. The federal government has been criticized for its inaction on the protests, but some now say Trudeau has overreached in using emergency powers. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association said the situation has not reached the "high and clear standard" needed to justify such sweeping measures.

9. Has anything like this happened before?

The closest recent example of this is the 1970 October Crisis, in which the prime minister's father, Pierre Trudeau, invoked the War Measures Act in response to a kidnapping and bombing campaign by Quebec separatists. The military was called in to support the police. In effect this was martial law, where anyone could be arrested and detained without a warrant. The current emergency powers act was designed to be less draconian and subject to parliamentary oversight.

Ottawa police warn occupiers: 'Leave now'

Politico, Andy Blatchford, 16 February 2022

Police are warning convoy protesters to leave Ottawa or face arrest.

But so far there are no signs that hundreds of semi trailers, tractors and pickups clogging the capital city's downtown core are willing to budge.

In one act of defiance, a group of demonstrators started roasting a pig in the middle of a major downtown street as the police warning came down.

Officers moved through the streets around Parliament Hill on Wednesday morning distributing flyers — one side English, one side French — warning of the consequences.

“Anyone blocking streets, or assisting others in the blocking [of] streets, are committing a criminal offense and you may be arrested,” the leaflet reads. “You must immediately cease further unlawful activity or you will face charges.”

The action comes on Day 20 of the occupation that has captured global headlines and inspired similar protests in Brussels and beyond.

Engines continue to rumble, diesel fumes still fill the air and many protesters, undaunted, are spending the lunch hour eating in makeshift mess halls that dot the area.

“It could be a bluff. It could be just scare tactics,” protester Todd Boutilier told POLITICO. “We're not going anywhere. We're holding the line. The whole world's watching right now.”

Ottawa's police chief Peter Sloly resigned Tuesday afternoon against fierce criticism that he had failed to respond decisively to the crisis. He was replaced by interim chief Steve Bell who has promised to end the occupation.

Earlier this week, the Liberal government invoked the never-before-used Emergencies Act, which they've described as a tool to strengthen and support police at all levels. The act also designates “protected places” where public assembly is prohibited if it “may reasonably be expected to lead to a breach of the peace.”

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Monday that measures will be targeted and time-limited.

The emergency measures, which came into effect Tuesday, expire 30 days after they come into force. Justice Minister David Lametti told reporters Monday that Ottawa hopes to revoke the measures “much sooner.”

Canada's Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino hinted Tuesday that tolerance with the status quo in downtown neighborhoods was no longer an option.

“No one wants to see another weekend like the last three on Wellington Street,” he said of the roadway at the foot of Parliament Hill now blocked by semis and host to three weeks of protest, dance parties and almost non-stop truck horns.

Truckers end US border blockade, siege in Ottawa goes on

Associated Press, Rob Gillies, 16 February 2022

Ottawa police trying to break the nearly three-week siege of the capital by truckers protesting Canada's COVID-19 restrictions began warning Wednesday drivers to leave immediately or risk arrest.

As tensions there rose, protesters at the last remaining truck blockade along the U.S. border — at Emerson, Manitoba — moved out, and authorities reopened the crossing into North Dakota, police said.

In Ottawa, authorities in yellow “police liaison” vests went from rig to rig, knocking on the doors of the trucks parked outside Parliament, to serve notice to the truckers that they could also lose their licenses and see their vehicles seized under Canada’s Emergencies Act.

Police also began ticketing vehicles.

Some truckers ripped up the order, and one protester shouted, “I will never go home!” Some threw the warning into a toilet put out on the street. Protesters sat in their trucks and defiantly honked their horns in a chorus that echoed loudly downtown.

At least one trucker pulled away from Parliament Hill.

There was no immediate word from police on when or if they might move in to clear the hundreds trucks by force. But protest leaders braced for action on Wednesday.

“If it means that I need to go to prison, if I need to be fined in order to allow freedom to be restored in this country — millions of people have given far more for their freedom,” said David Paisley, who traveled to Ottawa with a friend who is a truck driver.

Marie Eye, of Victoriaville, Quebec, who has been making soup for the protesters, said the warnings were “just a piece of paper” and doubted police had the manpower to remove the rigs or the protesters.

The warnings came just days after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invoked the emergency law.

Since late January, protesters in trucks and other vehicles have jammed the streets of the capital and obstructed border crossings, decrying vaccine mandates for cross-border truckers and other COVID-19 precautions and condemning Trudeau’s Liberal government.

The protests have drawn support from right-wing extremists and have been cheered on and received donations from conservatives in the U.S., triggering complaints in some quarters about America being a bad influence on Canada.

As the crisis appeared to heat up in Ottawa, the premiers of two Canadian provinces and 16 U.S. governors sent a letter to Trudeau and U.S. President Joe Biden calling on them to end their nations’ requirements that truckers crossing the border be vaccinated.

The bumper-to-bumper demonstrations by the so-called Freedom Convoy have infuriated many Ottawa residents, who have complained of being harassed and intimidated on the clogged streets.

Police in Ottawa were optimistic they could gain control in the coming days after Trudeau invoked the Emergencies Act on Monday.

Over the past weeks, authorities have hesitated to move against the protesters around the country, citing in some cases a lack of manpower and fears of violence.

Trudeau’s decision came amid growing frustration with government inaction. Ottawa Police Chief Peter Sloly lost his job this week after he failed to move decisively against the demonstrators.

As of Tuesday, Ottawa officials said 360 vehicles remained involved in the blockade in the city’s core, down from a high of roughly 4,000.

“They don’t want to give this up because this is their last stand, their last main hub,” said Michael Kempa, a criminology professor at the University of Ottawa.

Even after the warnings, a few protesters roasted a pig on the street in front of Parliament, and a child played with blocks in a small playground area on a road lined with trucks.

An Ottawa child welfare agency advised parents at the demonstration to arrange for someone to take care of their children in the event of a police crackdown. Some protesters had their youngsters with them.

Police in the capital appeared to be following the playbook that authorities used over the weekend to break the blockade at the economically vital Ambassador Bridge connecting Windsor, Ontario, to Detroit. Police there handed out leaflets informing protesters they risked arrest.

After many of those demonstrators left and the protest had dwindled, police moved in and made dozens of arrests. The blockade there had disrupted the flow of goods between the two countries and forced the auto industry on both sides to curtail production.